

ABSURD AS LOVE OF TERRESTRIAL LOVE IN “OUTSIDER BY ALBERT CAMUS

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Abstract

In the twentieth century there were a number of works dedicated to the absurd theme. This trend is kind of a key idea in the French literature among French authors. The authors created the whole gallery of the absurd characters, whereas Camus' Outsider is one of the major one. On the other hand, one should also note that this subject derives from the ancient times and is part of world literature works.

Keywords: Absurd, absurdity, eternal life, sisyphus, mortal

“What are you staring at? What are you seeking for in the eyes of this creature? Can you see the time, you motionless idle mortal being?” I would say without hesitation:

“Yes, I see the time, it is eternity!”

Eternity... Who knows how many times each of us has heard this word, tried to understand its meaning and define its limits, but all in vain. No human being has the quality to realize this abstract idea. It is really hard to imagine the strange world that is unexplored; whose breath did not touch our garments and the dust did not subside on the bottom of our consciousness.

Since the birth, and for some time later on, the life for a human being is represented as the eternity circle. Sometimes there comes a moment when they think they are omnipotent and immortal, but the logics put the limits to the reality around. But one is unavoidable. For a very short time, the very human being collides with the laws of life and this in the most cases happening on its own.

After a long, tiring day, laden with impressions, the person goes into the nature to find some relaxation. To say it in other words, they both enter into harmony and “pathetic silence of the world” („silence dérisoire de monde”). They find it pleasurable when a cool whiff of the wind caresses their naked bodies; they love watching the glitter of the stars because now they are really omnipotent, but suddenly they start looking into horizon, turn and start looking into different directions. Slowly they are lifting the head up for their strong desire at least in heaven to find the answer to their questions, but the sky is silent and endless.

Endlessness interpreted into the special meaning equals to eternity. So, the person is stunned to find that here, in this endlessness and eternity he (she) is the one who has limits because one day he (she) is going to die! The human being is mortal!

„Et jamais je n'ai senti, si avant, à la fois mon détachement de moi-même et ma présence du monde... Et ce qui me frappe à ce moment, c'est que je ne peux pas aller plus loin.” (Albert Camus. *Le Vent à Djemila*).

Shakespeare told us once about eternity versus the terrestrial life by placing a human skull into Hamlet's hands. “To be or not to be, that is the questions!” Just facing the eternity a human being starts to learn the idea of absurdity. They feel that he lives in vanity and that one day everything is going to be into oblivion.

A person does not wish to accept such an outcome.

„Ces deux certitudes „mon appétit d’absolu et d’unité et l’irréductibilité de ce monde à un principe rationnel et raisonnable, je sais encore que je ne puis les concilier” (Albert Camus. *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*).

They are about to riot! And that is the very idea Albert Camus calls the absurd.

„L’homme souhaitait demain, quand tout lui-même aurait dû s’y refuser. Cette révolte de la chair, c’est l’absurdité”.

For centuries have the human race been trying to find out the way out of this entangled labyrinth. The antic wisdom created the image representing a mortal face fighting with eternity. Eol’s son, Sisyphus will fall in love with life that much, that he is not even afraid to go against gods. He prefers a short-lived bliss to the eternity in the world of shades and puts the handcuffs to death itself. A person always experiences the fear to what is awaiting for them in afterlife as that world is unfamiliar to them, dark and unacceptable. He is petrified by its space and estrangement.

“ To sleep, perchance to dream—ay, there’s the rub,
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause. There’s the respect
That makes calamity of so long life.”

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

The key idea of existentialists is to follow this uninterrupted line. Camus’ riot is the cause of the conflict of a human being and nature, the contradiction. To say it in other way, a person feels their own meaningless and weakness with regard of the mighty world.

„L’absurde naît de cette confrontation entre l’appel humain et le selence déraisonnable du monde” (Albert Camus. *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*).

The writer secludes himself into the limits of an ancient Greek settlement in Algeria and feels happy witnessing the overpowering silence all around it. He plunges himself with all his might into the world of the sun and the ocean, where even the grass blades can bear some meaning for him.

„Tipasa est habitée par le dieux et les dieux parlent dans le soleil et dans la mer... cuirassée d’argent” (Albert Camus. *Noces à Tipasa*).

The spring sky is unusually cold but inviting. Now for the author the world is yellowish and slightly blue where he is always young and happy. The only discomfort for the author regarding the mentioned background is the ruins of the ancient settlement with its dead remnants. All the joys and sorrows, the vanity of its citizens are now drowned into the ocean of the times by that his happiness is also doomed for limits.

„Ce doit être cela la jeunesse, ce dur tête-à-tête avec la mort, cette peur physique de l’animal qui aime le soleil” (Albert Camus. *Le Vent à Djemila*).

That is why the idea of absurd slowly gets rooted into the authors mind too. The fear of death makes him get more and more addicted to earthly problems, pictures the surroundings with incredible colors and lures beyond the stunning emptiness and eventually makes him say the following: “Time is my field” (Goethe).

„ Mon royaume est de ce monde”. (Albert Camus)

Absurd is devouring.

„L’absurde ne délivre pas, il lie” (Albert Camus. *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*).

No living being can avoid the cruel sentence or escape the space of the narrow walls around. What is left to him; to subdue and live in a constant fear? But the outcry of the human nature is clearly heard to him. Rational and sensitive people try to find the way out of this prison, but of course on their own way. For the absurd personality it means creating their own world where he will find his happiness and the way to bar the thoughts of death. Here everything is orderly and arranged and all his wishes or aspirations are satisfied.

Each person according to their individual patterns choose the name of their world, be it poetry, art, indifference or limitless, reckless love. Who knows, may be poetry and wine was created for the reason, so that the person could find it possible to divert his (her) eye from reality, forget about the fact that their days are being depleted and try to find happiness somewhere else.

„Pour n’être pas les esclaves martyrés du Temps, enivrez-vous, sans cesse! De vin, de poésie ou de vertu, à votre guise” (Charles Bodelaire).

Other people try to find this shelter in art: “Art and only art is given to us so that we don’t die from reality” (Nietzsche).

Don Juan... Once one hears this name, in their consciousness something mythical and curios pop up. This mystical character appears sometimes in the works of different writers but when going to the end of those books, we still come to understand that the most idea stays unresolved...

„Ce nom mystérieux qui tout l’univers prend,

Dont chacun vient de parler, et que nul ne comprend” (Alfred de Musset).

But let us wait and not to hurry to use the epithets.

„ Le plus grand scélérat que la terre ait jamais porté, un enragé, un chien, un diable, un Turc, un hérétique, qui ne croit ni ciel, ni enfer, ni loup-garou”. (Maulière)

So, Don Juan preferred to split himself from the “Monde Hypocrite”, („Pour que le Don Juan soit possible, il faut qu’il y ait de l’hypocrisie dans le monde” (Stendhal) whose end is the death and decided to find his happiness somewhere else, in different circumstances. He idolized the endless feminine love and challenged the earthy just as supreme, heavenly laws. Only in the circle of beautiful women does he try to satisfy the aspirations of his soul. He is cute and only life contains sense to him.

„S’il quitte une femme, ce n’est pas absolument parce qu’il ne la désire plus. Une femme belle est toujours désirable. Mais c’est qu’il en désire une autre et non, ce n’est pas la même chose” (Albert Camus).

He is the one and the only one who would judge himself here on the earth. It would be a big mistake to qualify his actions as immoral or adultery... We should not also forget regardless the irresponsible life that Don Juan remains as a real knight risking his life, who helps those in an unequal fight:

„Il fait penser à ces artistes qui connaissent leurs limites, ne les excèdent jamais, et dans cet intervalle précaire où leur esprit s’installe, ont toute la merveilleuse aisance des maîtres. Et c’est bien là le génie: l’intelligence qui connaît ses frontières” (Albert Camus).

An absurd person never tries to understand deeper. His main worry is time, without which life is unimaginable to him. He is not amused by the idea of death. Even the hell does not exist here, nothing that is not visible to him. In other words, there is only today and never tomorrow.

„ Je crois que deux et deux sont quatre et que quatre et quatre sont huit”.

And it is really hard to call such a person “a sinner”. He will never repent but considers himself sinless. His whole life is committed to the pursuit for happiness.

„C’est de vivre qui assurait son innocence. C’est de la mort seule qu’il a tiré une culpabilité maintenant légendaire” (Albert Camus).

„Pour toujours je serai étranger à moi-même et à ce monde” – says Albert Camus and accordingly the characters of his novels involuntarily follow the ways of life from the authors own imagination. Regarding the blue and golden landscape in the background, the life line of the Outsider is unfolded. At the beginning of the novel we have an impression that the main protagonist is a heartless person, void of all kinds of emotions.

„Aujourd’hui maman est morte. Ou peut-être hier, je ne sais pas”.

The tragedy of his life may be represented in the following way: Marceau, who is indifferent even at the time of his mother’s death and during the funerals, is worried only by

the heat and road, drinks his coffee sitting by the coffin and amuses himself by the observation of the old people. Next day he leaves for bathing into the sea, does not abstain from the possibility to tie up summer relationship with a woman and then without delay goes into the movies to watch the comedy. And then, just to satisfy his corporal desires, kills an innocent Arab and surely, regarding all these details he is justly sentenced to the capital punishment. But judging like that there will be no difference between us and those in court, who as if performing some theatrical shows, would demonstrate, signify their personal virtues towards people.

The outline given above is just a sideways part of the story. Once we go deeper, a question arises, what was the reason Marceau developed this kind of attitude towards life. Was the murder he committed pointless? To answer this question, logically we should follow his lifeline.

Once in the novel it was mentioned that in his youth Marceau lived in Paris. No doubt, he was the same child youngster and a student as other ones. He also tasted something of feminine life and pinned much hope to education. He was following the everyday urban life with hope in his eyes. But what if one day the guy failed his examinations, lots of disillusionments possibly followed: a girlfriend or friends turned away and the whole tower of hope crumbled down, so carefully built.

„Le simple souci est l'origine de tout” (Albert Camus).

He concluded that everything was false, that all the buildings get demolished one day and human life yields to oblivion. So he becomes an absurd personality.

He goes to live in some remote city and from this perspective Paris looks like a remote, shiny, decorated place.

„C'est sale... Il y a des pigeons et des cours noirs. Les gens ont la peau blanche.”

He feels absolutely detached from emotional world and settled down to the very place where the only thing to worry about is a carnal satisfaction. Therefore, mother's death is another annoyance for the employee. For him it is less understandable why oldies should pour their tears for the one life then, also the last meeting with the mom, Salamano's love to his dog or the idea of life for another “mechanical” woman. To him everything in life looks like another play of absurdity. The most important to him is no one interferes into his world and stirs his peace. At the same time we should lose from sight the following fact: Camus' protagonist is a human being, after all and not a mechanical machine. The feelings still find their remote place somewhere in his life and though simplified, let him know about themselves. They follow like a warm streak into the Outsider's veins every time when he witnesses the eternal beauty of the world. Nor accidental is the fact, that in his confession Marceau pays much attention to Algerian picturesque landscape.

„ A travers les lignes de cyprès qui menaient aux collines près du ciel, cette terre rousse et verte, ces maisons rares et bien dessinées, je comprends maman. Le soir , dans ce pays, devait être comme un rêve mélancolique”.

The outsider is an absurd personality and as all the absurd people, there is only one thing he loves more than himself – life. He cannot and would not picture himself in any other world; he is not able to see the world beyond the grave where possibly not that much bluish sea is waiting for him, stirring underneath his feet, or a cool gale, protecting him from the sizzling sun. Being himself at the threshold of death, he is tormented by the fear of the unexplored, unknown reality.

All the people display sort of selfishness at times. Marceau feels extremely envious to those people who are left beyond the prison walls, to those “sentenced to the capital punishment” for whom life is to be continued. To the all questions of the weeping priest he has the only one answer – he does not wish paradise, or hell, but...

A personality so much in love to terrestrial life tries to reap all the fruit of it and in the end starts living in the very garden that makes him extremely happy. For Marceau these

surroundings are of temporal nature, but he has not realized it yet. The nature he thought he had lost some time ago he would accidentally find on the beach of the Mediterranean and clings to it.

The outsider reached his goal; he is extremely happy on this lonely beach! The sun is dribbling into his veins and the sea is moistening his heated toes. He is making towards the waterfall to enjoy its coolness and beauty.

„C’était le même éclatement rouge. Sur le sable, la mer haletait de toute la respiration rapide et étouffée de ses petite vagues... Toute ce chaleur s’appuyait sur moi et s’opposait à mon avance. Et chaque fois que je sentais son grand souffle chaud sur mon visage, je serrais les dents, je fermais les poings dans les poches de mon pantalon, je me tendais tout entier pour triompher du soleil et de cette ivresse opaque qu’il me déversait”.

According to Camus, the murder takes place just at the moment when there is something wrong between proportions of real world and the goals set. Marceau’s intention is hampered by the shiny blade of knife. The Arab stayed on the way of the protagonist and hampered his last chance to be happy. Marceau fires and the harmony of the day is over.

„J’ai secoué la sueur et le soleil. J’ai compris que j’avais détruit l’équilibre du jour, le silence exceptionnel d’une plage où j’avais été heureux. Alors, j’ai tiré encore quatre fois sur un corps inerte où les balles s’enfonçaient sans qu’il y paraît. Et c’était comme quatre coups brefs que je frappais sur la porte du malheur”.

The only tragedy for the protagonist is parting with the terrestrial life, where a lot of time of unexplored joy is left. Just ahead of execution does he realize how strong his love towards life is. Besides, he understands those people with the same experiences. Now he understands why his mother was engaged just before her death as just as he understands now that she was also eager to drink the sap of life. His mom died happy because she truly believed that she could always start anything from anew.

„Personne n’avait le droit de pleurer sur elle”.

So is the outsider, he can start from anew too, while he is alive and therefore happy. He is ready to get any challenge from life, ready for reconciliation just to enjoy the minutes of life even if he is hailed as disgrace by the “still live people”.

„J’ai senti que j’avais été heureux et que je l’étais encore”.

Gods punished Sisyphus but his punishment is symbolic – from the realm of shades he keeps on preaching the great love of life, just as absurdity. The stone rolled up by him are our hopes and dreams, and our life is represented by the road heading to the top. The stone rolled up to the top slides back again and again does it lure human beings to take it back to the final destination.

The mythology does not tell us whether Sisyphus sees any dream in the realm of Hades, maybe he even does and these dreams are earthly life. Dizzy from the newly gone sleep, irreconcilable with the terrestrial laws – a mortal human being will utter: „Mon royaume est de ce monde”.

Conclusion:

Thus, we can conclude that Albert Camus’ “Outsider” is not a laudatory hymn of nihilism and marginalism. The character’s “absurdity” is revealed in his strong attachment to real life and with the help of stylistic devices embodies the theory presented in Camus’ “The Myth of Sisyphus”.

According to Albert Camus, an absurd person is not an individual who has turned down from society or/and rejected existence. A person having cognized the world of absurd tries to take pleasure in every minute of the real life and expresses great love and attachment to the existing world.

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